

OIL SPILL TASK FORCE

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Docket Management Facility (M-30)
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Re: 33 DR Parts 160, 161, 164, and 165; USCG – 205-21869, Vessel Requirements for Notices of Arrival and Departure and Automatic Identification Systems

Dear Madam/Sir,

These comments are submitted on behalf of the Pacific States/British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force, whose membership includes the oil spill regulatory agencies of Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, Hawaii, and California. The Task Force member agencies appreciate this opportunity to comment on the proposed rule for Vessel Requirements for Notices of Arrival and Departure and Automatic Identification Systems, the implementation of which offers advantages with regard to both navigation safety and vessel traffic analysis.

The West Coast Offshore Vessel Traffic Risk Management (WCOVTRM) Project was co-sponsored by the Pacific States/British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force and the US Coast Guard Pacific Area from 1999 to 2002. The goal of the project was to reduce the risk of collisions or drift groundings caused by vessel traffic transiting 3 to 200 nautical miles off the West Coast between Cook Inlet in the north and San Diego in the south. Vessels of concern included tank, cargo/passenger, and fishing vessels of 300 gross tons or larger, as well as tank barges. Representatives of key stakeholders groups, working together from 1999 to 2002, collected and reviewed data on typical coastwise traffic patterns, traffic volume, existing management measures, weather data and ship drift patterns, historic casualty rates by vessel type, the availability of assist vessels, the environmental sensitivity of the coastlines, socio-economic consequences of a spill, and projections of relevant future initiatives. Using the drift and tug availability data, they modeled likely tug response times under both average and severe weather conditions and used a risk-ranking process to map higher and average risk zones along the West Coast. Their 2002 final report is available at: http://www.oilspilltaskforce.org/wcovtrm_report.htm.

That report recommended a five-year review of the status of implementation of its various recommendations. Consequently, the Pacific States/BC Oil Spill Task Force collaborated with the U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area and with the same stakeholder interests from 2007-2008 to conduct such an analysis. The final report from this Five-Year Review included new recommendations for improving the safety of coastwise navigation as well as data collection. This report is available at: http://www.oilspilltaskforce.org/docs/wcovtrm_5_year_status_review_report.pdf.

The WCOVTRM Project 2008 recommendations appropriate to this rulemaking include:

- Under Part 1, RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE NAVIGATION SAFETY AND AVOID VESSEL CASUALTIES, one recommendation states that "Recognizing the value of AIS carriage for collision avoidance, and noting that the U.S. Coast Guard and Transport Canada continue to refine AIS carriage requirements, the WCOVTRM Workgroup recommends that the USCG and Transport Canada require AIS carriage on all vessels of 65' or longer operating in all navigable waters, independent of VTS systems." This proposed rulemaking would do just that.
- Under Part III of the 2008 report, RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING TRACKING COMPLIANCE WITH RECOMMENDED VESSEL TRANSIT DISTANCES OFFSHORE, the WCOVTRM Workgroup recommended that the U.S. Coast Guard's data collection systems be improved to monitor vessel compliance with the 2002

recommendations for minimum transit distances offshore. Those 2002 recommendations are voluntary, but are shown on the navigation charts. They call for all tank ships laden with persistent product to transit at least 50 nautical miles offshore, except when entering or leaving a port. All other vessels 300 gross tons or larger, as well as laden tank barges, are advised to transit at least 25 nm offshore. An ability to monitor adherence to these voluntary recommendations would assist us in knowing if they are effective.

Current U.S. Coast Guard attempts to monitor compliance with these recommendations are hampered by the lack of detailed data regarding vessels transiting offshore. The proposed revisions to the NOAD requirements would improve this situation by providing a Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number as well as information regarding whether a vessel is 300 gross tons or less. Tracking data would also be improved if either the NOAD data or MMSI number data included information on vessel type (cargo, passenger, tank ship, or tank barge).


- Under Part IV, RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING DATA IMPROVEMENTS, the WCOVTRM Project Workgroup recommended that the USCG require Notice of Arrival information which includes both Last Port of Call and Next Port of Call data. Such information would facilitate analysis on the volume of coastwise transits and would thus support navigation risk analyses as well as data for proposed maritime traffic air-quality impact studies.

In another risk analysis project currently undertaken by the Pacific States/BC Oil Spill Task Force in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, we are trying to determine what percentage of tank ships and barges arriving at West Coast ports are single versus double hulled. Current efforts to determine this information from the U.S. Coast Guard's database are proving challenging. It would greatly enhance our overall "big picture" regarding oil spill risks in U.S. waters if the NOAD and/or MMSI information included single versus double hull data for all tank ships and barges, both U.S. and foreign flag. With that in mind, we recommend that these data fields be added to the requirements in this rulemaking.

In summary, the member agencies of the Pacific States/BC Oil Spill Task Force support extending AIS carriage requirements to vessels 65' and larger, as well as to U.S. waters beyond VTS areas. We also support submittal of information regarding vessel size. In addition, we recommend requiring information on vessel type, last and next port of call, and hull type for tank ships and barges.

Thanking the U.S. Coast Guard for its commitment to improving navigation safety and environmental protection, I remain,

Sincerely yours,



Jean R. Cameron
Executive Coordinator

cc: CAPT John Bingaman, USCG Pacific Area
CDR Patrick Maguire, USCG District 11
Pacific States/BC Oil Spill Task Force Coordinating Committee
Miles Boothe, Washington Department of Ecology